

FOOD AND  
NUTRITION  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE

**Months of Inadequate  
Household Food Provisioning  
(MIHFP) for Measurement of  
Household Food Access:  
Indicator Guide**

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## I. Introduction

All Title II programs have improvements in food security as their core objective. As defined by USAID, food security has three components - availability, access, and utilization.<sup>1</sup> Title II programs focus on the access and utilization components. Utilization, in the context of food security, refers to the individual's biological capacity to make use of food for a productive life. Consensus on the measurement of the utilization component has centered on various measures of nutritional status (anthropometric measurement) of children. Household food access is defined as the ability to acquire sufficient quality and quantity of food to meet all household members' nutritional requirements for productive lives. Given the variety of activities implemented by Cooperating Sponsors (CSs) to improve household food access and the significant challenges most CSs face in measuring household food access for reporting purposes, there is a need to build consensus on appropriate household food access impact indicators. This guide provides an approach to measuring household food provisioning as a proxy measure of household food access.

In light of the need to build consensus on household food access impact indicators, two strategic objective level indicators of household food access – household dietary diversity (HDDS) and months of inadequate household food provisioning (MIHFP) - were identified during the development of USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP)'s FY05-08 strategy, through a process of consultation and discussion with CSs, researchers, and other technical groups. Inputs from the FAM M&E Working Group and the FFP Performance Management Plan (PMP) Working Group were particularly critical.

These two indicators focus on the desired outcome of improved food access - - improved household food consumption. FFP will be requiring all new Title II Multi-Year Assistance Programs (MYAP) with improved household food access as an objective will be required to include these indicators in their results frameworks. In addition, a Household Food Insecurity Scale (HFIS) to measure the experience of household food insecurity is being tested for future inclusion as an indicator.<sup>2</sup>

Food access depends on the ability of households to obtain food from their own production, stocks, purchases, gathering, or through food transfers from relatives, members of the community, the government, or donors. A household's access to food also depends on the

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<sup>1</sup> USAID defines food security as, "when all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a productive and healthy life." Three distinct variables are essential to the attainment of food security: 1) Food Availability: sufficient quantities of appropriate, necessary types of food from domestic production, commercial imports or donors other than USAID are consistently available to the individuals or are within reasonable proximity to them or are within their reach; 2) Food Access: individuals have adequate incomes or other resources to purchase or barter to obtain levels of appropriate food needed to maintain consumption of an adequate diet/nutrition level; 3) Food Utilization: food is properly used, proper food processing and storage techniques are employed, adequate knowledge of nutrition and child care techniques exist and is applied, and adequate health and sanitation services exist. (USAID Policy Determination, Definition of Food Security, April 13, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> See FANTA's *Measuring Household Food Insecurity Workshop Report* (2004) for information on efforts to develop a generic, universally applicable measurement instrument that can be used to construct an experiential HFIS in a range of country and cultural contexts. As viewed at [www.fantaproject.org/publications/mhfi\\_2004.shtml](http://www.fantaproject.org/publications/mhfi_2004.shtml).

resources available to individual household members and the steps they must take to obtain those resources, particularly exchange of other goods and services.

As a household manages its resources over the course of a year, the ability to meet their food needs may vary due to any number of factors such as inadequate crop production by the household due to poor soils or lack of labor, loss or decrease in income sources such as employment, social obligations, or natural disaster. The overall goal of food security programs is to reduce the degree to which a household is vulnerable to any factor that results in insufficient food or to enhance community resilience and livelihood capacities in the face of shocks. Title II program activities may reduce this vulnerability in any number of ways. Over time, the MIHFP indicator can capture changes in the household's ability to address vulnerability in such a way as to ensure that food is available above a minimum level the year round. Measuring the MIHFP has the advantage of capturing the combined effects of a range of interventions and strategies, such as improved agricultural production, storage, and interventions that increase the household's purchasing power.

## **II. Collecting the Data**

This guide provides guidance on the specific data collection needs for the MIHFP indicator. It assumes that these questions will be part of a population-based survey instrument and will be applied to all the households in the sample.

*When to collect the data:* To most accurately capture improvements in household food access over time, a CS should collect data for MIHFP during the period of greatest food shortages (such as immediately prior to the harvest). This will increase the accuracy of recall of the months when the household did not have sufficient food. Subsequent data collection (final evaluations, for example) should be undertaken at the same time of year.

*Recall Period:* Although the response options start with the month of January, the respondent is asked to think back over the previous 12 months, starting with the current month. If needed, the interviewer may prompt the respondent to think about last month in order to start the process of recall.

*How to collect the data:* Data for this indicator are collected by first screening out those households that were able to provide for their household food needs throughout the entire year. Those households that respond positively (i.e., were unable to adequately provide for the household) to the screening question are then asked to identify in which months (during the past 12 months) they did not have access to sufficient food to meet their household needs. The focus of these questions is the months in which there is limited access to food regardless of the source of the food (i.e., purchase, barter, or production).

These questions should be asked of the person who is responsible for food preparation, or if that person is unavailable, of another adult (e.g. the head of the household). The questions refer to the household as a whole, not any single member of the household.

Those households that respond negatively (i.e., had adequate food supply throughout the past year) to the first question should still be included in the calculation of the indicator (“total number of households) or the level of food insecurity will be overestimated.

### III. Questionnaire Format

In order to collect data on months of inadequate household food provisioning, the following questions should be added to the baseline and final survey.

	QUESTIONS AND FILTERS	CODING CATEGORIES	SKIP
1.	<p>Now I would like to ask you about your household’s food supply during different months of the year. When responding to these questions, please think back over the last 12 months.</p> <p>PLACE A <i>ONE</i> IN THE BOX IF THE RESPONDENT ANSWERS YES TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTION. PLACE A <i>ZERO</i> IN THE BOX IF THE RESPONSE IS NO.</p> <p>In the past 12 months, were there months in which you did not have enough food to meet your family’s needs?</p>	<p>..... </p>	<p>IF NO, END HERE</p>
2.	<p>DO NOT READ THE LIST OF MONTHS.</p> <p>WORKING BACKWARD FROM THE CURRENT MONTH, PLACE A ONE IN THE BOX IF THE RESPONDENT IDENTIFIES THAT MONTH AS ONE IN WHICH THE HOUSEHOLD DID NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.</p> <p>If yes, which were the months (in the past 12 months) in which you did not have enough food to meet your family’s needs?</p>		
A	January	A.....	
B	December	B.....	
C	November	C.....	
D	October	D.....	
E	September	E.....	
F	August	F.....	
G	July	G.....	
H	June	H.....	
I	May	I.....	
J	April	J.....	
K	March	K.....	
L	February	L.....	

## IV. MIHFP Indicator Tabulation Plan

The tabulation of the responses is a simple tally of total months that can be done by hand or with the aid of computer software such as a database or spreadsheet. First, the MIFP *variable* is calculated for each household.

MIHFP (0-12)	<p>Total number of months out of the previous 12 months that the household was unable to meet their food needs. Values for A through L will be either “0” or “1”.</p> <p>Sum (A + B + C + D + E + F + G + H + I + J + K + L )</p>
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Second, the average MIFP *indicator* is calculated for the same population. The denominator should include all households interviewed, even those who had did not experience any months of inadequate household food provisioning.

Average MIHFP	<p>Sum (MIHFP )</p> <hr/> <p>Total Number of Households</p>
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It may be helpful to use the results of this question for on-going discussions with community members about household food security, for example, in developing a more detailed household food security calendar which describes labor needs and weather patterns which influence access to food.

## V. Setting Targets

While this indicator is used widely among Title II programs, there has been no research done to assist in setting targets. The degree of change that can realistically be expected in the context of a 5 year program Title II is not known.

Two options are available to determine appropriate targets.

- First option is to use the months of inadequate food provisioning of wealthier households as a target. Because projects using the MIHFP indicator usually include interventions aimed at increasing household income, baseline surveys generally collect some income or economic status information. If income data are available, the sample could be divided into three income groups (terciles of income), and the average months of inadequate food provisioning calculated for the richest income tercile. The average MIHFP in the richest 33 percent of households can then serve as a target number of months of inadequate food provisioning. Where income data are not available, income groups can be defined using proxies, such as possession of assets or other items found to be highly correlated with income in the project population.

- Second option: In the absence of income or economic data from the baseline survey, a MIHFP target can be established by taking the average months of inadequate food provisioning of 33 percent of households with the lowest number of months of inadequate food provisioning (lowest tercile of months of inadequate food provisioning).

## **VI. References**

Bonnard, Patricia et al. *Report of the Food Aid and Food Security Assessment: A Review of the Title II Development Food Aid Program*. Washington, D.C.: Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project, Academy for Educational Development, 2002.

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